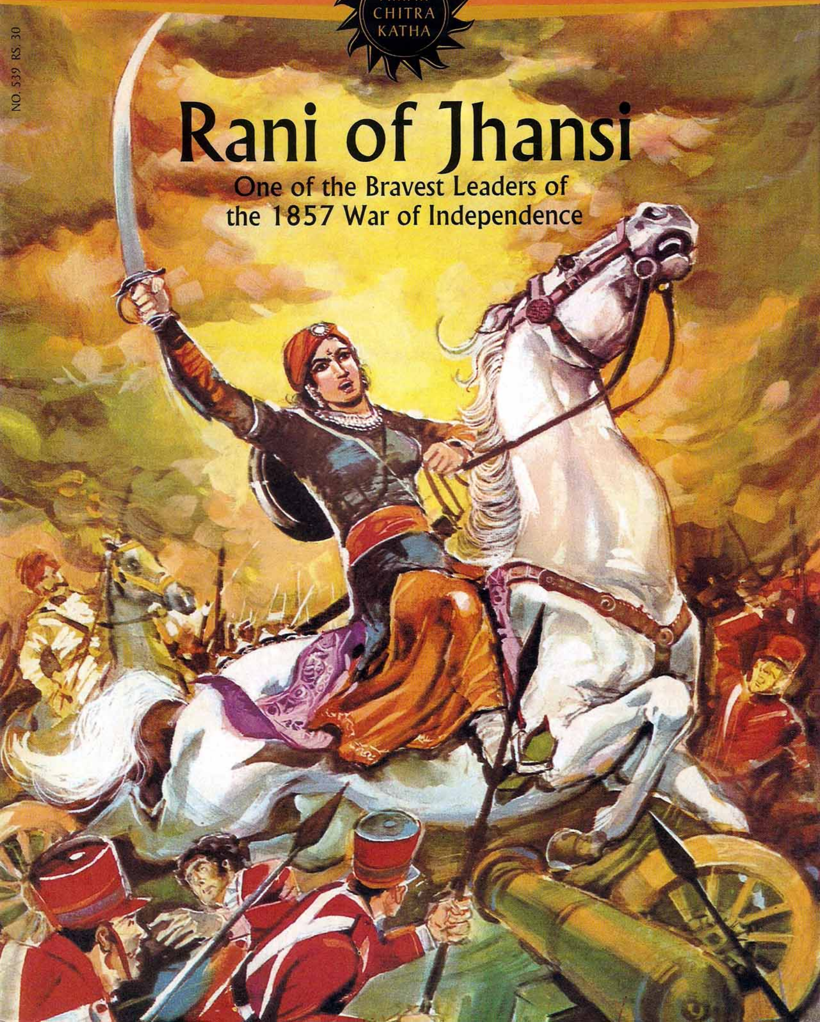
RANI OF JHANSI

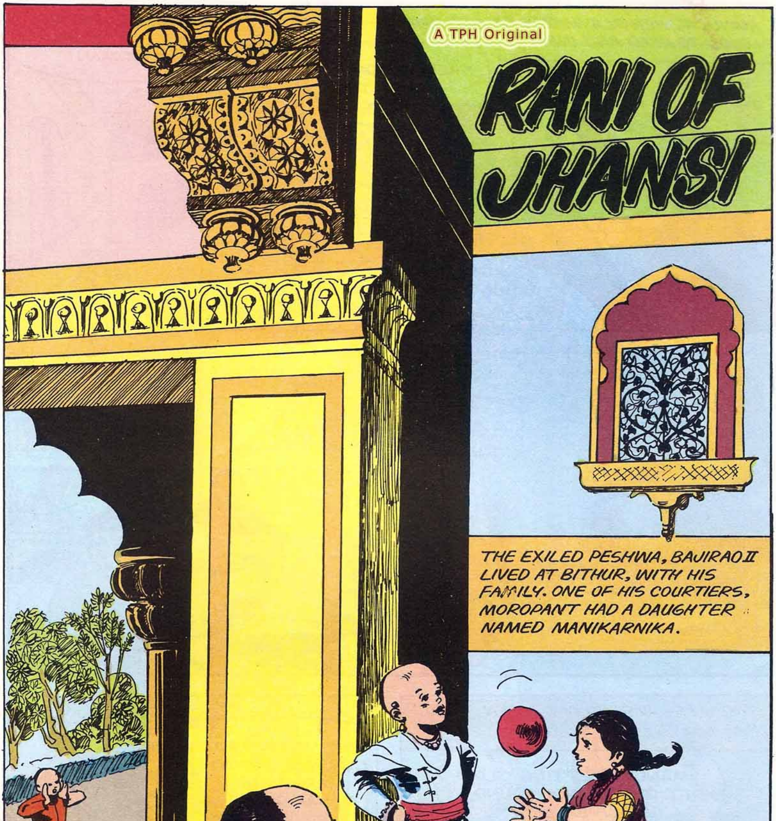
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

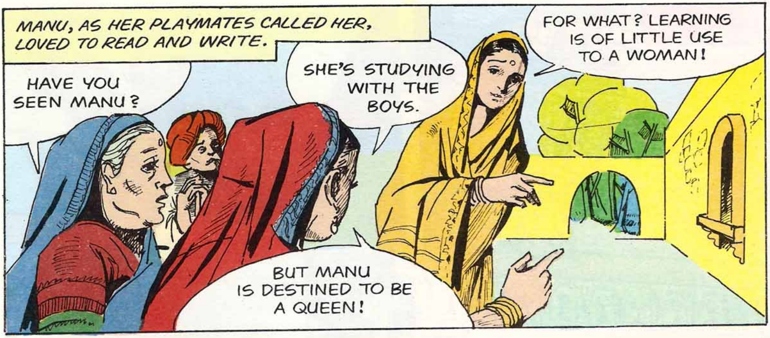
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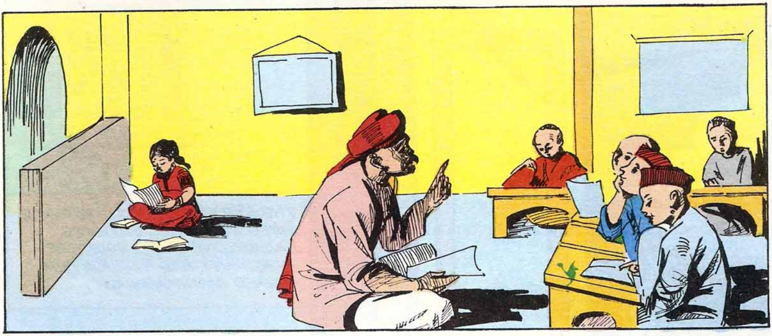
Rani of Jhansi

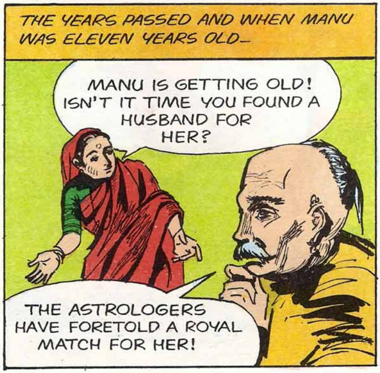
One of the Bravest Leaders of the 1857 War of Independence




A TPH Original
RANI OF JHANSI
THE EXILED PESHWA, BAJIRAO II LIVED AT BITHUR, WITH HIS FAMILY. ONE OF HIS COURTIERS, MOROPANT HAD A DAUGHTER NAMED MANIKARNIKA.

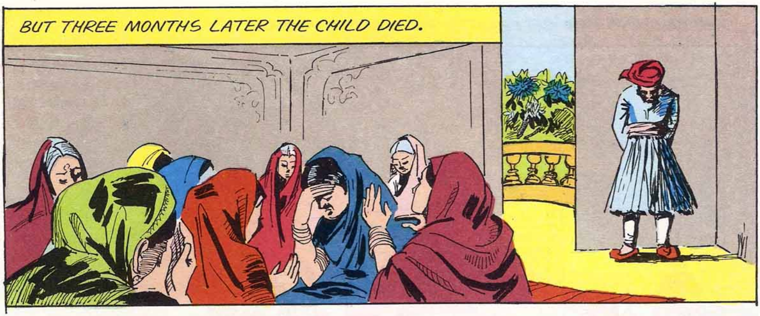

MANU, AS HER PLAYMATES CALLED HER, LOVED TO READ AND WRITE.
HAVE YOU SEEN MANU?
SHE'S STUDYING WITH THE BOYS.
FOR WHAT? LEARNING IS OF LITTLE USE TO A WOMAN!
BUT MANU IS DESTINED TO BE A QUEEN!



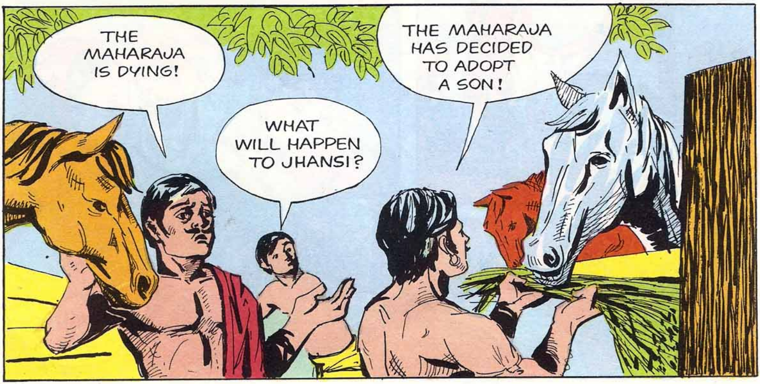

THE YEARS PASSED AND WHEN MANU WAS ELEVEN YEARS OLD—
MANU IS GETTING OLD! ISN'T IT TIME YOU FOUND A HUSBAND FOR HER?
THE ASTROLOGERS HAVE FORETOLD A ROYAL MATCH FOR HER!

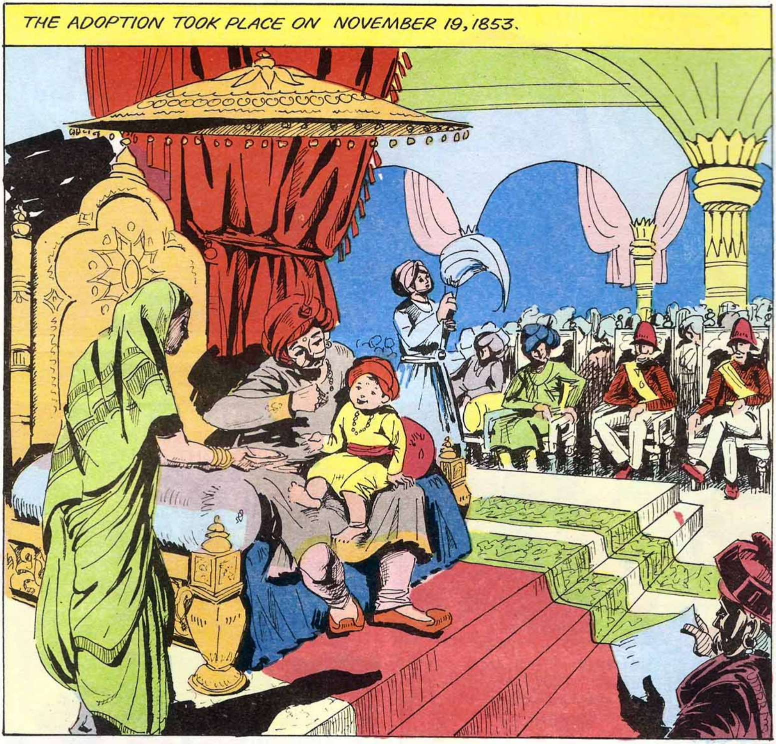

HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS? OUR MANU IS TO MARRY THE MAHARAJA OF JHANSI!
AND SHE WILL BE NAMED LAKSHMIBAI, IN HONOUR OF THE GODDESS OF WEALTH AND VICTORY!
AND SO ANOTHER YEAR PASSED.

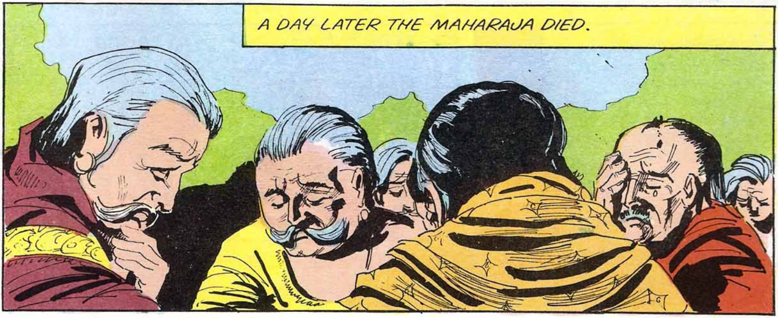

THE WEDDING WAS CELEBRATED WITH GREAT POMP...
...AND CEREMONY IN MAY 1842.
IN 1851 LAKSHMIBAI GAVE BIRTH TO A SON.
THIS IS A HAPPY DAY FOR JHANSI!


BUT THREE MONTHS LATER THE CHILD DIED.


THE MAHARAJA WAS PLUNGED IN GRIEF AND DESPAIR.
ALAS! I HAVE NO SON TO SUCCEED ME! WHAT SHALL I DO?

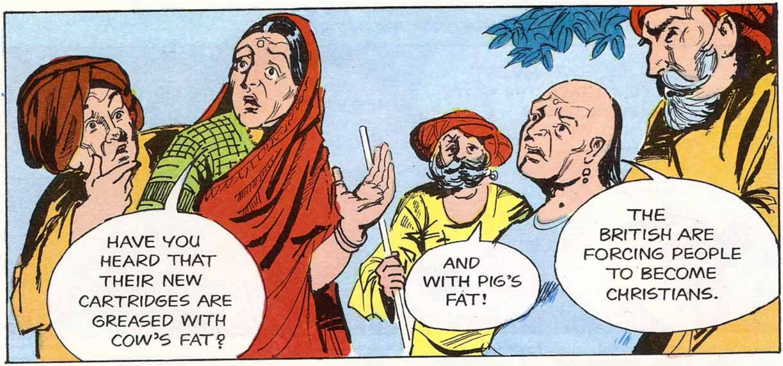

THE MAHARAJA IS DYING!
WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO JHANSI?
THE MAHARAJA HAS DECIDED TO ADOPT A SON!


THE ADOPTION TOOK PLACE ON NOVEMBER 19, 1853.

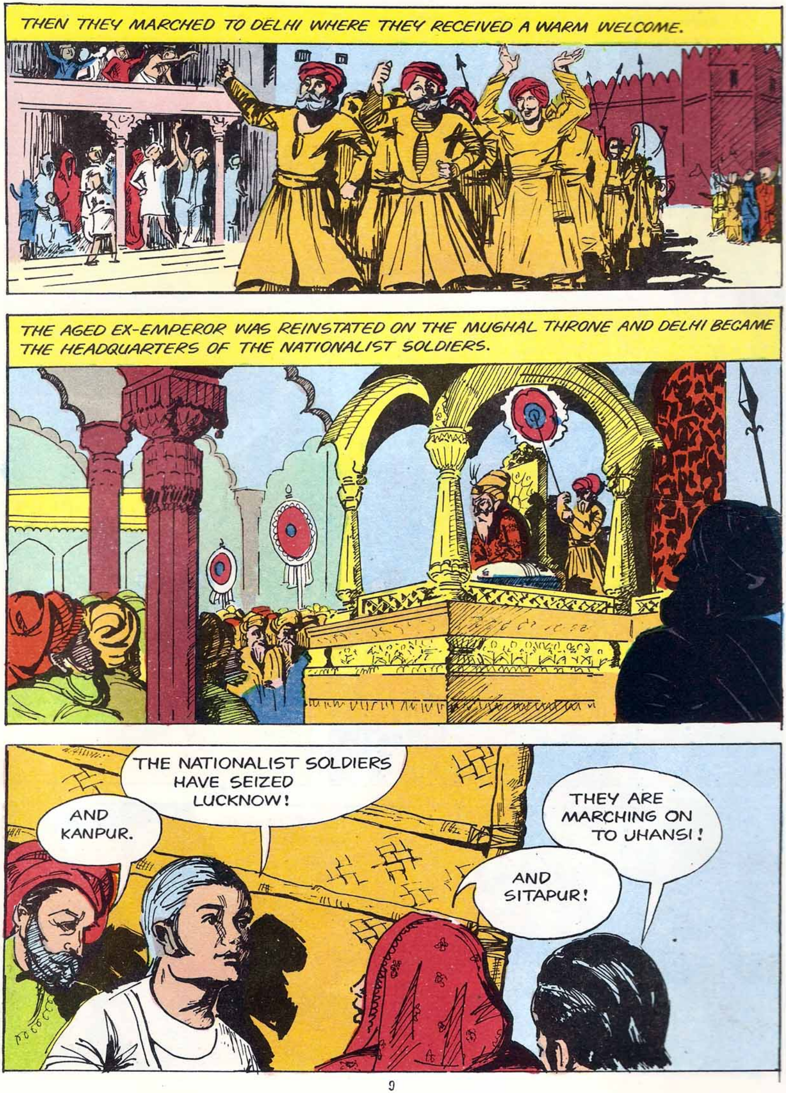

A DAY LATER THE MAHARAJA DIED.


THE FATE OF THE PEOPLE OF JHANSI IS NOW IN MY HANDS! I MUSTN'T LET THEM DOWN!
SO RANI LAKSHMIBAI DEVOTED HERSELF TO THE EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE.
THIS MAN SAYS, YOU HAVE USURPED HIS LAND. WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY IN YOUR DEFENCE?
THERE WAS A DROUGHT LAST YEAR. I'LL LOWER THE TAX ON WHEAT.
LAKSHMIBAI SENT A PETITION TO THE GOVERNOR GENERAL FOR THE RECOGNITION OF HER ADOPTED SON.


BUT THE GOVERNOR GENERAL REJECTED THE PETITION.
THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO TAKE THE STATE OF JHANSI UNDER ITS WING.
I WILL NOT GIVE UP MY JHANSI!
IT WAS A DAY OF MOURNING, IN JHANSI.
THE COMPLETE SUPPORT OF HER PEOPLE RENEWED LAKSHMIBAI'S SPIRIT.
THE RANI OF JHANSI WAS NOT BORN TO WEEP! I WILL SEND AN ENVOY TO LONDON WITH AN APPEAL.
BUT–
THE BRITISH HAVE REJECTED YOUR APPEAL!
THEY HAVE NO SENSE OF JUSTICE. I WILL NOT OBEY THEM.
THE BRITISH WERE BECOMING MORE AND MORE UNPOPULAR.
THEY ANNEXED SATARA WITHOUT JUSTI-FICATION.
OUR ANCIENT HANDLOOM INDUSTRY HAS BEEN RUINED BY CHEAP BRITISH CLOTH.


HAVE YOU HEARD THAT THEIR NEW CARTRIDGES ARE GREASED WITH COW'S FAT?
AND WITH PIG'S FAT!
THE BRITISH ARE FORCING PEOPLE TO BECOME CHRISTIANS.


ON MAY 10, 1857 THE GARRISON OF MEERUT OPENLY REVOLTED, SHOT THEIR OFFICERS AND RELEASED IMPRISONED COMRADES.

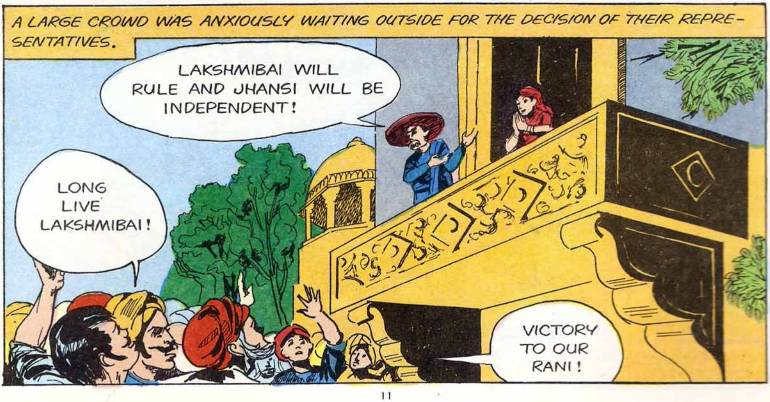

THEN THEY MARCHED TO DELHI WHERE THEY RECEIVED A WARM WELCOME.
THE AGED EX-EMPEROR WAS REINSTATED ON THE MUGHAL THRONE AND DELHI BECAME THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE NATIONALIST SOLDIERS.
THE NATIONALIST SOLDIERS HAVE SEIZED LUCKNOW!
AND KANPUR.
THEY ARE MARCHING ON TO JHANSI!
AND SITAPUR!



THE BRITISH RAN TO LAKSHMIBAI AND BEGGED FOR HELP.
WE WANT YOU TO TAKE OVER THE KINGDOM UNTIL BRITISH AUTHORITY IS RE-ESTABLISHED.
YOU REFUSED ME MY KINGDOM WHEN I ASKED FOR IT. NOW THAT YOU CANNOT KEEP IT, YOU ARE HANDING IT TO ME! THE INDIAN TROOPS WILL DESTROY ME IF I GIVE YOU PROTECTION. YOU HAD BETTER SAVE YOUR LIVES AS BEST YOU CAN.
THE BRITISH WERE POWERLESS AGAINST THE NATIONALIST SOLDIERS AND WERE COMPLETELY ROUTED.
LET'S GO TO DELHI AND LEAVE LAKSHMIBAI TO RULE JHANSI.
THE POOR RANI HAS ALSO BEEN TREATED BADLY BY THE BRITISH!


BUT RANI LAKSHMIBAI CALLED A CONFERENCE OF ALL CLASSES OF HER PEOPLE.
I WANT MY PEOPLE TO DECIDE WHO SHOULD RULE JHANSI!
FOR THE TIME BEING, RANI SAHIBA SHOULD ASSUME CONTROL.


THE RANI WILL RULE JHANSI FOREVER!
WE ARE LOYAL SUBJECTS OF THE RANI OF JHANSI!


A LARGE CROWD WAS ANXIOUSLY WAITING OUTSIDE FOR THE DECISION OF THEIR REPRESENTATIVES.
LAKSHMIBAI WILL RULE AND JHANSI WILL BE INDEPENDENT!
LONG LIVE LAKSHMIBAI!
VICTORY TO OUR RANI!

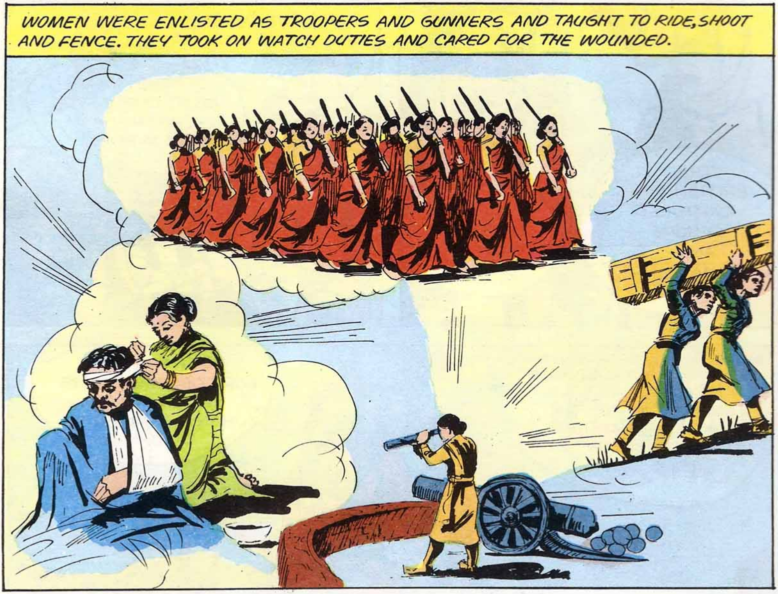

WE HAVE COME TO PERFORM RAMLEELA.
WELCOME! THE RANI WILL BE PLEASED TO SEE YOU!
LAKSHMIBAI WAS A GREAT PATRONESS OF ART AND LITERATURE.
THE STATE LIBRARY WAS LAKSHMIBAI'S SPECIAL INTEREST. SHE OFTEN BOUGHT NEW BOOKS REGARDLESS OF THEIR COST.
THE FIRST CHALLENGE TO LAKSHMIBAI'S RULE CAME FROM SADASHIV RAO, A DISTANT NEPHEW OF THE LATE MAHARAJA.
I AM THE KING OF JHANSI.
THE RANI OF JHANSI IS OUR RULER.
LAKSHMIBAI SENT HER TROOPS AGAINST HIM AND DEFEATED HIM IN A SINGLE ENCOUNTER.

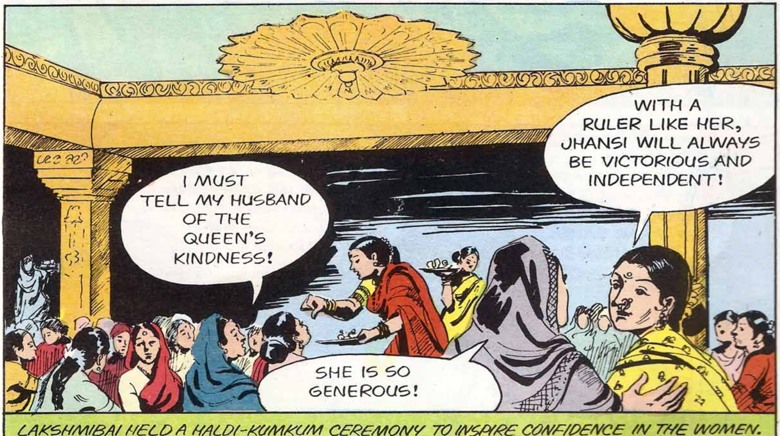

THE PRINCES OF DATIA AND ORCHA, TWO NEIGHBOUR STATES, TRIED TO WREST JHANSI FROM LAKSHMIBAI BUT HER TROOPS DEFEATED THEM.
THE SOLDIERS OF ORCHA ARE APPROACHING!
LET THEM DO THEIR UTMOST! WE WILL NOT GIVE UP JHANSI!
WE MUST NOT WASTE MEN NEEDLESSLY. WE'LL ONLY ATTACK WHEN THEY ARE NEAR.
THE JHANSI SOLDIERS ARE NOT FIRING! LET'S GO FORWARD AND TAKE THE FORT!
BOOM!
BOOM!
LAKSHMIBAI'S TROOPS OPENED FIRE AND THE INVADERS RETREATED IN CONFUSION.


THE ORCHA TROOPS SILENTLY MOVED FOUR GUNS UNDER THE COVER OF DARKNESS AND MADE A MASSIVE ATTACK ON THE JHANSI FORCES.
BOOM!
BOOM!
WE ARE DEFEATED! ALL IS LOST.
DON'T LOSE COURAGE! JHANSI NEVER ADMITS DEFEAT!
ENCOURAGED BY THEIR QUEEN, THE JHANSI TROOPS ROUTED THE ENEMY.


RANI LAKSHMIBAI HELD A GRAND DURBAR TO CELEBRATE HER VICTORY.
I AM PROUD OF MY MEN! YOU ARE BRAVE AND FEARLESS!
HOWEVER THERE WAS BAD NEWS FROM DELHI.
THE BRITISH HAVE CAPTURED DELHI!
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE EMPEROR?
HIS SONS WERE TREACHEROUSLY SHOT. THE EMPEROR HAS BEEN IMPRISONED.
NANA SAHEB'S ARMY HAS BEEN DEFEATED AND KANPUR REOCCUPIED.
ALL OF OUDH HAS BEEN RECONQUERED BY THE BRITISH.
WILL IT BE JHANSI'S TURN NEXT?


SO LAKSHMIBAI BEGAN TO MAKE PREPARATIONS TO FACE AN ATTACK FROM THE BRITISH.
WE MUST HAVE A FIRE-BRIGADE!
ARE THERE ENOUGH STORES OF FOOD AND FODDER TO MEET A LONG SIEGE?
WE WILL HAVE TO PROCURE MORE ARMS.
THEN THE RANI CALLED FOR MEN TO ENLIST IN HER ARMY.
HOW MANY OF YOU WILL FIGHT FOR YOUR JHANSI?
I WILL!
WE ALL WILL!
THE WOMEN OF JHANSI, TOO, MUST HELP!
WHAT CAN WE DO?


WOMEN WERE ENLISTED AS TROOPERS AND GUNNERS AND TAUGHT TO RIDE, SHOOT AND FENCE. THEY TOOK ON WATCH DUTIES AND CARED FOR THE WOUNDED.


I MUST TELL MY HUSBAND OF THE QUEEN'S KINDNESS!
WITH A RULER LIKE HER, JHANSI WILL ALWAYS BE VICTORIOUS AND INDEPENDENT!
SHE IS SO GENEROUS!
LAKSHMIBAI HELD A HALDI-KUMKUM CEREMONY TO INSPIRE CONFIDENCE IN THE WOMEN.


THE BRITISH HAVE CAPTURED SEHORE AND RAHATGARH!
THEY HAVE TAKEN SAGAR!
THEY'VE DEFEATED OUR ALLY, THE RAJA OF BANPUR!
THEY'LL BE AT OUR GATES WITHIN A FEW WEEKS!
MEANWHILE, IN THE BRITISH CAMP_
NOW THAT THE FORT OF CHANDERI IS IN OUR HANDS, JHANSI IS ALMOST OURS!
DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE RANI OF JHANSI! SHE'S THE BEST ONE ON THE REBEL SIDE!
WHY DON'T YOU ASK YOUR OLD FRIENDS TATYA TOPE AND RAO SAHEB FOR HELP?
I HAVE. TATYA TOPE HAS ALREADY ATTACKED THE RAJAS OF PANNA AND CHARKHARI, STAUNCH ALLIES OF THE BRITISH.


HE CAPTURED 24 GUNS AND TOOK RS. 3,00,000!
BUT THE BRITISH ARE STILL DETERMINED TO ATTACK JHANSI!
LAKSHMIBAI CALLED A REPRESENTATIVE MEETING OF HER PEOPLE AND ASKED IF THEY WANTED TO DEFEND THE CITY OR SUE FOR PEACE.
I THINK WE SHOULD FIGHT BUT I LEAVE THE DECISION IN YOUR HANDS!
WE SHOULD SAVE OUR HOMES. I'M AGAINST WAR.
NO, WE'LL FIGHT! WE'LL UPHOLD THE INDEPENDENCE OF JHANSI!
NO FOREIGNER WILL RULE JHANSI!
YES!
LONG LIVE LAKSHMI-BAI!
VICTORY TO OUR QUEEN!
YOU HAVE TAKEN A BRAVE AND NOBLE DECISION. WE'LL FIGHT! IF VICTORIOUS WE'LL ENJOY FREEDOM. IF DEFEATED OR SLAIN WE EARN ETERNAL GLORY!

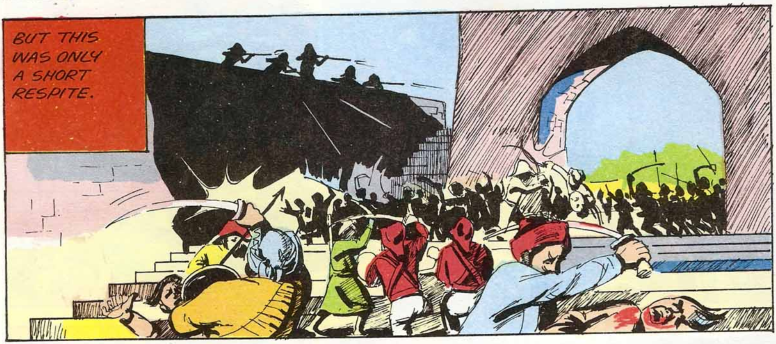

EARLY ON MARCH 25, 1858 BRITISH GUNS BEGAN TO BOMBARD JHANSI. BUT LAKSHMIBAI'S GUNNERS ANSWERED SHOT FOR SHOT.
BOOM!
BANG!
BOOM!
BOOM!
FOR 5 DAYS THE BRITISH GUNS POUNDED DAY AND NIGHT BUT WITH LITTLE RESULT.
THEN A PARAPET AND TOWER WERE SLIGHTLY DAMAGED.
COME ON, LET'S REPAIR THE BREACH!
WE'LL NEVER LET THE FOREIGNER IN!
LOOK! TATYA TOPE IS COMING TO OUR RESCUE!
WE'RE SAVED!
IT'S TATYA TOPE.
THEY'VE LIT AN ENORMOUS BONFIRE!
THE BRITISH WILL NEVER RULE JHANSI.


AT NIGHT THE BRITISH BROUGHT TWO 24-POUNDERS AND BOMBARDED TATYA'S MEN.
AND THE NEXT DAY THE BRITISH ROUTED TATYA'S ARMY IN A SINGLE ENCOUNTER.
LAKSHMIBAI ASSEMBLED HER OFFICERS.
WE MUSTN'T LOSE HEART. WE CAN FIGHT THE BRITISH ALONE. YOU HAVE FOUGHT WITH MATCHLESS COURAGE BEFORE. I AM DEPENDING ON YOU. I KNOW YOU WILL DO IT!
ALL IS LOST!
VICTORY WILL BE OURS!
WE WILL FIGHT TO THE LAST MAN.
WE WON'T GIVE UP.

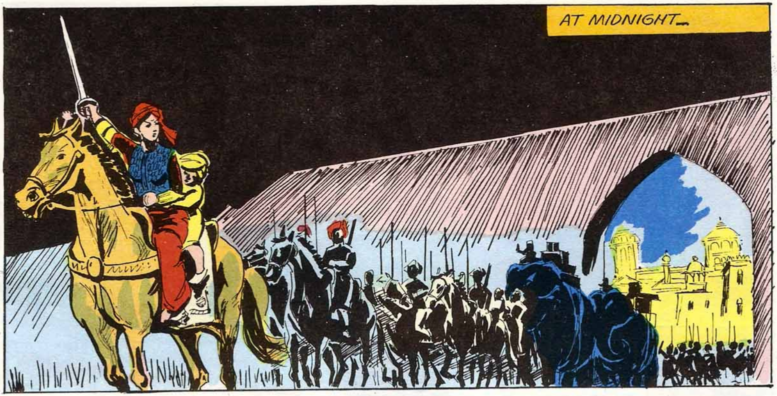

ON APRIL 3, 1858 –
LOOK! THERE'S WHERE WE SHOULD CLIMB!
OUR ALLY IN THE QUEEN'S CAMP HAS KEPT HIS WORD!
HE WAS WELL-PAID!
THE BRITISH ARE UPON US!
LET THEM COME! WE'LL SHOW THEM HOW THE MEN OF JHANSI FIGHT!


THE BRITISH ARE INSIDE THE FORT.
THERE'S NO HOPE NOW! ALL CHANCE OF VICTORY IS LOST! SHOULD I SURRENDER?
NO, NEVER!
AND LAKSHMIBAI AT THE FOREFRONT OF HER TROOPS CHARGED AT THE BRITISH.


THE COUNTER ATTACK WAS SO UNEXPECTED AND FIERCE THAT THE BRITISH WERE FORCED TO TAKE COVER.


BUT THIS WAS ONLY A SHORT RESPITE.


I'VE DECIDED NOT TO SURRENDER. THOSE WHO WANT TO DIE MAY REMAIN WITH ME. OTHERS MAY LEAVE THE FORT.
YOU ARE A BRAVE WOMAN. I WILL STAND BY YOU. WE'LL LEAVE THE CITY TO-NIGHT AND JOIN RAO SAHEB AT KALPI.


AT MIDNIGHT...


THE RANI OF JHANSI HAS ESCAPED!
LET'S GIVE CHASE!
WE'LL NEVER CATCH UP WITH HER!
SHE'S KILLED TWO SOLDIERS WHO TRIED TO CAPTURE HER!


THE BRITISH HAVE DESTROYED JHANSI!
THEY HAVE EVEN WRECKED THE STATE LIBRARY!

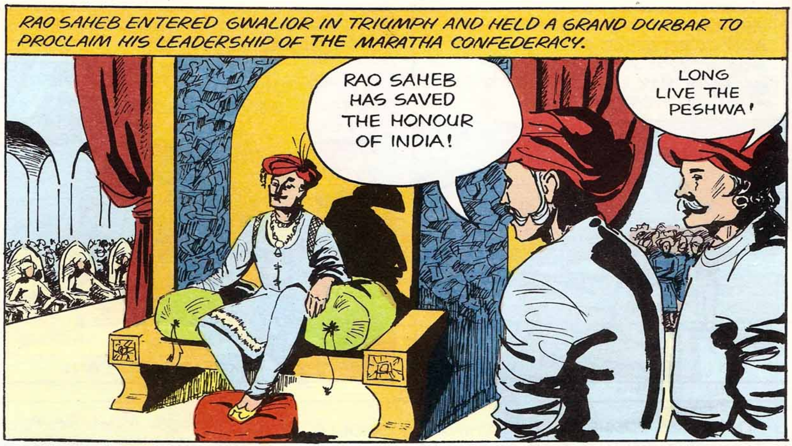

WHY? WHAT WRONG HAVE THE PEOPLE OF JHANSI DONE?
THE BRITISH SAY THEY WANT TO TEACH THE CITY A LESSON AND SET AN EXAMPLE SO THAT NONE WILL AGAIN DARE TO CHALLENGE THEM!


LAKSHMIBAI RODE INTO RAO SAHEB'S CAMP AT KALPI.
WELCOME BRAVE WARRIOR. I NEED YOUR SUPPORT IN MY STRUGGLE.
NOTHING WILL GIVE ME GREATER HAPPINESS THAN TO DIE ON THE BATTLE-FIELD SERVING THE MARATHA STANDARD!
I WOULD LIKE YOU TO INSPECT THE TROOPS.
YOU MUST HAVE STRICT DISCIPLINE IN THE RANKS. THERE SHOULD BE MILITARY DRILL AND EXERCISES EVERY MORNING.
THE BRITISH ARE PLANNING A SIEGE ON KALPI!
LET'S GO OUT AND MEET THEM AT KOONCH.
THAT'S A GOOD IDEA. WE'LL FACE THEM IN THE OPEN.
WE MUST HAVE A STRONG REARGUARD!
WE'RE ALL VETERANS IN THE ART OF WAR! LET THE BRITISH COME!


BUT THE OVER-CONFIDENT NATIONALIST LEADERS DID NOT HEED LAKSHMIBAI'S COUNSEL ABOUT A STRONG REARGUARD AND RAO SAHEB'S ARMY WAS ROUTED.
ALL IS LOST! LET'S FLEE!
THERE IS NO HOPE NOW. WE MIGHT AS WELL SURRENDER!
WE'VE BEEN UTTERLY DEFEATED!
DON'T LOSE HEART. THE NAWAB OF BANDA HAS JUST ARRIVED WITH A FORCE OF 2,000 CAVALRY, GUNS AND INFANTRY!
RAO SAHEB HELD A COUNCIL OF WAR TO CONSIDER THEIR NEXT MOVE.
OUR SITUATION IS BECOMING WORSE EVERY HOUR. WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
WE'LL FIGHT TO THE LAST MAN.
WE SHOULD FIGHT TO THE END. WE CAN STILL RETRIEVE OUR HONOUR IF WE OFFER A DETERMINED RESISTANCE AND THE TROOPS OBSERVE DISCIPLINE.


BUT THE CLEVER STRATEGY OF THE BRITISH AGAIN WON THE DAY AND RAO SAHEB'S ARMY FLED IN CONFUSION.
NOW LAKSHMIBAI MOUNTED HER HORSE AND ATTACKED THE ENEMY LIKE A TIGRESS.
HER EXAMPLE ENCOURAGED THE OTHER LEADERS WHO NOW DASHED FORWARD TO JOIN THE ATTACK.
COME ON! VICTORY WILL BE OURS!
FOLLOW THE RANI OF JHANSI! THE ENEMIES ARE RETREATING!
THEN SIR HUGH ROSE, THE BRITISH GENERAL, ORDERED THE CAMEL CORPS TO CHARGE.
THE PESHWA'S MEN, UNABLE TO WITHSTAND THE ATTACK, FELL BACK IN CONFUSION.

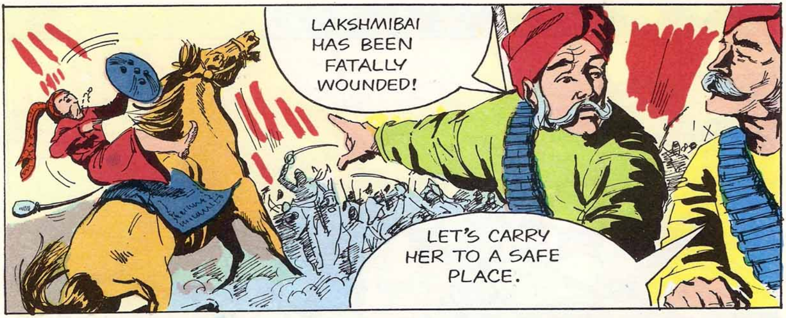

THE REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT WAS NOW COMPLETELY SHATTERED. THE BRITISH TOOK OVER THE FORT OF KALPI ON MAY 24, 1858 WITHOUT FURTHER FIGHTING.
THE NATIONALIST CHIEFS HELD ANOTHER CONFERENCE.
ALL CHANCES OF VICTORY ARE AT AN END!
WE CAN HARASS THE ENEMY BY GUERRILLA WARFARE.
THAT'S AN EXCELLENT PLAN!
THAT WAS POSSIBLE FOR THE MARATHAS BECAUSE THEY POSSESSED UNCONQUERABLE FORTRESSES. WE CANNOT FIGHT WITHOUT A STRONG FORT.
I THINK WE SHOULD MARCH TO GWALIOR AND OBTAIN THE HELP OF THE MAHARAJA. WITH THAT FORT IN OUR HANDS WE CAN STILL CARRY ON THE WAR AND WIN.
I AGREE. THOUGH HE IS AN ALLY OF THE BRITISH, HIS PEOPLE ARE ON OUR SIDE.
HAS THE MAHARAJA OF GWALIOR AGREED TO GIVE US MONEY AND SUPPLIES?
NO! HE HAS ORDERED HIS TROOPS TO ATTACK US.
THE SIGHT OF LAKSHMIBAI WAS ENOUGH TO MAKE THE GWALIOR ARMY DROP THEIR GUNS.
LOOK! IT'S THE RANI OF JHANSI!
HAIL, RANI OF JHANSI!
VICTORY TO LAKSHMIBAI!


RAO SAHEB ENTERED GWALIOR IN TRIUMPH AND HELD A GRAND DURBAR TO PROCLAIM HIS LEADERSHIP OF THE MARATHA CONFEDERACY.
RAO SAHEB HAS SAVED THE HONOUR OF INDIA!
LONG LIVE THE PESHWA!

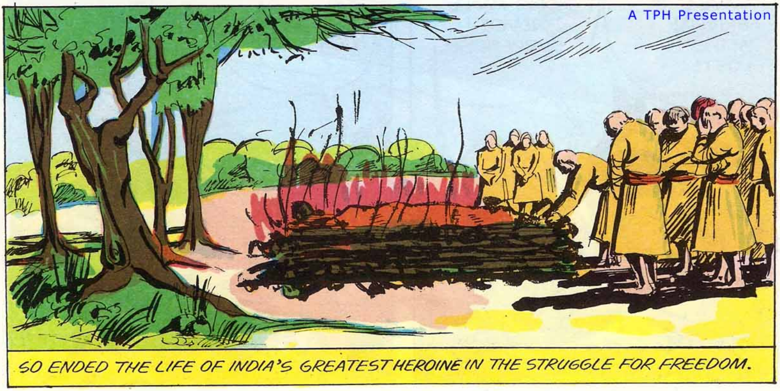

AS THE CEREMONIES CONTINUED, LAKSHMIBAI GREW IMPATIENT.
WE HAVE FUNDS, AND A WELL-EQUIPPED ARMY. WE SHOULD PREPARE FOR THE NEXT STRUGGLE.
WE HAVE PLENTY OF TIME.


SO WHEN THE BRITISH MARCHED ON GWALIOR RAO SAHEB WAS TOTALLY UNPREPARED.
THE BRITISH HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO ATTACK!
AND OUR ARMY IS NOT READY. TAKE YOUR TROOPS OUT FOR ONE LAST GLORIOUS ATTACK. I AM READY TO DO MY DUTY. YOU DO YOURS! GOD BE WITH YOU!


LAKSHMIBAI DRESSED IN A MAN'S GARB ADVANCED TO ATTACK THE ENEMY.
BRITISH RE-INFORCEMENTS HAVE ARRIVED! ALL IS LOST!
I WILL NOT LOSE HOPE! I WILL NEVER SURRENDER!
THE ARMIES WERE EVENLY MATCHED.
FORWARD! COME ON!


LAKSHMIBAI HAS BEEN FATALLY WOUNDED!
LET'S CARRY HER TO A SAFE PLACE.


CARRY ON THE GLORIOUS FIGHT, MY BRAVE SOLDIERS. THE DAYS OF FREEDOM SHALL SOON DAWN.


SO ENDED THE LIFE OF INDIA'S GREATEST HEROINE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM.

AMAR CHITRA KATHA

Illustrated Classics From India

Rani of Jhansi

Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi is among those national heroines whose name builds up visions of tremendous bravery and valour against overwhelming odds. She was not aggressive by nature. It was only when the British threatened to annex her small kingdom that she took up arms. Undoubtedly, Rani Lakshmibai was one of the bravest leaders of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. She was at the forefront of every battle, encouraging her troops.

Rani Lakshmibai was also extremely shrewd and possessed all the qualities of a good leader. When she died fighting on the battlefield the morale of the Mutiny broke and other rebel leaders like Tatya Tope, Rao Sahib and the Nawab of Banda could not offer much resistance. Thus a chapter of the heroic defiance against better-equipped forces came to an end. The unforgettable memory of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi however, remained–the memory of a person of unbreakable pride and utter fearlessness.

The bards of Central India still sing of the Rani's valour and virtues – not only because she stood up to her enemies in Bundelkhand but also the mighty British.

Editor: Anant Pai

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